

**Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy
Policy & Advocacy Action Team
6.11.20 ♦ 12:00 – 1:30 pm
Meeting Notes**

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot
- Ellen Buelow, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tim Davis, NM Center on Law and Poverty
- Melanie Eastwood, New Mexico First
- Zoey Fink, Farmer, and National Young Farmers Coalition
- Derek Lin, New Mexico Voices for Children
- Jonas Moya, New Mexico First
- Carlos Navarro, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tsiporah Nephesh, New Mexico Thrives
- Kurt Rager, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry
- Pam Roy, NM Food and Ag Policy Council
- Mag Strittmatter, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Brent Van Dyke, NM Association of Conservation Districts
- Emily Wildau, New Mexico Voices for Children

Introductions – What are you hopeful about and what concerns do you have re. influence in special session?

- Carlos said it looks like they are trying to do the least harm in the budget. Challenge will be 2021 session.
- Kurt is the director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry. He said he was hopeful that the legislature will not be making major cuts during the special session. He didn't see how it would be possible to influence anything during the special session. Hopeful we'll be able to make better progress in hunger and other areas.
- Sherry said she was encouraged that legislators are committed to do no harm for existing funding for hunger relief. She added that she thought the session was expected to be quick. Sherry went on to say she hoped that pre-work will be enough in terms of legislator education. She said she was not hopeful about the additional funding ask but added that Rep. Stansbury had mentioned there might be other ways to find it. She said it was exciting that the food bank is able to be more involved in the policy side of things. She added that she had worked with Sen. Rodriguez to set up memorials around school food waste and gleaning, and the related workgroup have started up. They'll have a report to the legislature by Nov. 1 from the school food waste group.
- Zoey said she was hopeful that planting is going better and getting food out to people in need is going well. She added that she hopes that funds will not be taken from the emergency relief programs.
- Brent commented that he did not think we would take a big hit for 2020. He thinks 2021 and 2022 will be challenging for everyone. He hoped that this and other groups would help build an infrastructure in NM to relieve food shortage and food deserts.



NEW MEXICO FIRST
People. Ideas. Progress.

Please contact Sharon Berman at sharon@nmfirst.org if we missed or misunderstood anything in these notes.

- Derek said it seemed like the session would be short enough to not do any damage. He added that he felt discouraged that money might be diverted from the wrong programs and adversely affect families.
- Emily noted that she was excited to see that they will be proceeding with caution in the special session. She echoed Derek's concern about the possibility of diverting funds from important programs. She echoed Kurt's hopeful statement about changes from the primary.
- Pam said she had been speaking with agencies and had heard there might be only a 2-3% scrub. Regarding the senior meals pilot project funded through the legislature last year, in February-May counties learned how to purchase \$50,000 of NM fruits and vegetables and move them into their programs along with COVID. Pam added that the Kiki Saavedra Dignity Fund was established last year and said she hoped it will not get downsized too much. Pam added that she is looking at 2021 and beyond and that having a more comprehensive approach will be a focus for the NM Food and Ag Policy Council.
- Ellen said she was hopeful that the EBT for summer feeding for kids will get a big push. She is concerned whether there will be cuts to HHS.
- Mag said she was hopeful that we will find ways forward to feed the entire state in the next 24-36 months as we start the recovery process from the pandemic. And her concern was that we would not find ways to address the issues. She noted that the levels of hunger and unemployment will be exacerbated, and PPP will become even scarcer as time goes on. Nonprofits are budgeting for FY2021 and it is hard to know how to anticipate what will be needed.
- Tsiporah commented that she was hopeful for the work this group is doing, and for the healthy soil initiatives around regenerative agriculture. She said she was concerned about legislators doing remote meetings. She said some of the meetings made her wonder how the public and lobbyists will be able to comment during the special session.
- Tim Davis said he appreciated everyone's contributions. He noted that uncertainty around everything was concerning.
- Jonas said he was hopeful for upcoming sessions for the ability of the group to do advocacy and show the importance and impact of programs the group is putting forward.
- Sharon said she was encouraged by the good work the Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Group has done, preparing the letter on transparency, equitable access and good democracy for the legislature, as well as the funding priorities document the group created and sent out to legislators, the executive branch and agencies. She added that she was concerned that people might not have employment or food, or have what they need going forward.



- Melanie said she was hopeful that we are communicating with the legislators. She added that Lilly had offered an op-ed for more transparency during the session. She was encouraged by all the work by the whole team.
- Lilly said she was hopeful by thinking ahead and listening to each other. She added that understanding solutions were getting at root causes for food insecurity. She appreciated that the group was looking at strengthening food & water relief. She said sometimes raising procedural justice issues is important. Food systems and resilient local ag coming together in a systemic way had her hopeful. Lilly added that we had sent to legislators, executive branch, agencies and most recently primary winners, the funding priorities document, including the letter the group had sent out, and a letter from the NM Food and Ag Policy Council. Lilly found concerning that there doesn't look to be any way for community input to happen in the special session. She noted that we are recirculating the original letter that we sent out in early May related to transparency, equity and democratic processes, and we are also sending it out as an editorial to the press. Lilly added that she intends to reach out as a citizen to her legislators.

National Issues and Opportunities

- Sherry said the Food Depot has been working on getting SNAP benefits increased at the federal level.
- Pam said that they were also focused on SNAP. She said there was a set of bills, one of which would allow farmers to provide farm product to food banks. She said there might be a broader bill introduced to incorporate lessons learned during the pandemic regarding equitable access for food assistance and farmers. Pam added that the National Farm to School Network was putting together a slate of bills. She said it was important to make sure that people apply for programs, such as CFAP, administered by Farm service Agency. In the first week it received 300 applications. Pam said that dairies and cattle producers had applied, and that crop farming was also covered.
- Tim said the state has set up a P-EBT hotline: (505) 660-4822. He added that there are three stages to the plan. 1) the state automatically extends benefits to people already in the program; 2) the state will mail new EBT cards to people in programs such as Medicaid; 3) people not known in HSD system but are eligible and need to apply.
- Derek said one study showed that more than a million dollars [has yet to come to the state through stimulus payments](#). The deadline to apply is October 15. Derek added that another study highlighted [what can be done with state outreach on stimulus payments](#). He noted that nationally, food insecurity has doubled since February and that NM is slightly below the national average with a 1.86 increase in food insecurity¹. Derek added that they are in the process of creating a fact sheet coming out on food tax, and should publish it early next week.
- Lilly requested that when information is shared to the group, that everyone share it in their networks and social media so we can be coordinated in our messaging. She added that whatever we can do to help get consistent information to legislators is helpful.
- Zoey said their federal team was slammed and there was a bill going forward regarding transparency and the police force.
- Kurt said that the national office was very active and were also working on the SNAP increase. He said they were also focusing on the protests and the deaths at the hands of the police force. He said their church (the ELCA) puts out social statements and are working to get members of congregation engaged and active in advocacy, thinking

¹ Derek said in a follow up email that 11.6% of New Mexicans received free food in the week prior to this June 11 meeting.

and acting beyond their comfort zones. He said the church is responding to the congregation in terms of COVID-19.

- Tsiporah said there are bills being debated and worked on. The PPP Flexibility Act just got signed into law, which will help nonprofits acquire PPP. She added there is another bill specific to non-profit relief, which will be stimulus payments for nonprofits, which hasn't gotten legs yet. Another bill will seek to increase the above the line charitable deduction to \$4,000 for individuals and \$8,000 for couples filing jointly.
- Lilly noted that NM First's Health: Body, Mind & Spirit Town Hall, originally scheduled for April was postponed to August. For public health reasons and equity/access issues, the NM First's committees and board of directors decided to conduct the town hall remotely. The Town Hall will have several tracks: Health Workforce, Continuum of Care and others. There was agreement to include the food security work this group is doing that connects with many of NM First's topic areas on the agenda, as it is a health issue. The organization is continuing the community conversations it began throughout the state, and now will be remotely conducted. The conversations address what's working regarding health in NM and where policy could be used to ramp up and disseminate good processes. The background report will be published in late July. Lilly asked everyone to stay tuned and help inform and shape the policy agenda around health.

Funding for Food Banks

Lilly noted that \$12.5 million dollars needs to be available so food banks can provide backbone support across the state to feed people in New Mexico. Lilly noted that there were communities that either would have had less food or would have had no food if the food banks had not been there for them during the pandemic. She asked everyone to be in touch with the executive branch, agencies and legislators to ask them to make sure the emergency food sector has the resources they need.

